

August 25, 2009

To: The Whatcom County Executive,
The Whatcom County Council, and
The Whatcom County Planning Commission

From: Kathy Berg, Birch Bay, WA

RE: The Birch Bay UGA Proposal of August 17, 2009

I ask that you, the decision makers, **Please - recognize the uniqueness of Birch Bay and allow it to grow well** because we know that it WILL grow.

I feel the need to remind you what Birch Bay is and what it is not.

Birch Bay is:

- **A residential / resort community where the Year 2000 Census showed that 51% of housing units were seasonally occupied.** A guess by the Birch Bay Water & Sewer District is that the summer population of Birch Bay (especially when crab season opens) can be anywhere from 2- to 4-times the number of permanent residents and must be planned for and accommodated with appropriate urban facilities and services.
- A mailing in the year 2000 showed that **1/3rd of Birch Bay property owners were Canadian or otherwise outside of the USA.** This suggests that they must have urban facilities and services available to them but they do not use such facilities and services 100% of the time.
- Located immediately to the south of the Birch Bay UGA is the Cherry Point UGA where NO housing or service businesses exist. Birch Bay already houses some of those employed at the Cherry Point industries and it is logical that Birch Bay could efficiently **house at least some of the 2,000 additional Cherry Point employees** projected to year 2029. Birch Bay also provides some commercial services to Cherry Point employees such as restaurants, coffee shops, catering, transient housing and the like.

Birch Bay is NOT:

- The **“typical small town USA”** with a main street / downtown commercial area and surrounding suburbs. Birch Bay’s main street is the resort commercial / residential Birch Bay Drive along the shoreline. The shoreline is NOT an appropriate area for services such as the grocery store, drug store, bank, cleaners, gas station, etc. Such facilities and services belong in the uplands along Blaine Road at it’s intersections with Birch Bay Lynden and Alderson Roads, in convenient neighborhood nodes where rents are not as high and the critical areas aren’t as critical and can be mitigated. The uplands are also the appropriate place for less expensive housing. A healthy, sustainable city will need a healthy, sustainable commercial sector of its economy which does not now exist in Birch Bay.

My concern is not so much the population or employment projection numbers. My concern is **that the Birch Bay UGA remain large enough in area, considering the almost 50% wet lands, to develop appropriately as the community has envisioned in its 2004 Community Plan which recognizes the uniqueness of the Birch Bay situation** and was very consciously and deliberately devised over time with a great deal of public input.

Your consideration of this very important matter to the future of Birch Bay is greatly appreciated.